**Close Reading in the Arts**

Selecting a ‘text’:

When selecting a work of art for close reading, consider two questions:

1. Is there enough going on with the language and craft of the work to warrant the attention of multiple ‘readings’?
2. Does the understanding that comes from close reading sufficiently benefit students in light of the larger goals of the course or unit?

The answer to both needs to be yes in order to keep close reading from falling into its reputation as merely an exercise.

Engaging carefully with the text yourself (just as the students will)– ‘read’ the work multiple times with different (increasingly complex) purposes as you read & re-read

* + Determine the general meaning of the text
  + “What’s going on, and how do I know?”
  + Examine the ways the ‘author’ (artist, choreographer, playwright, composer) uses ‘language’ and the discipline-specific structures of ‘literature’ to create meaning (artistic elements –color/texture/design, movements, dialogue/characterization, notes/dynamics/tempo).
  + “How do the ‘author’s’ choices help me understand or appreciate something that I didn’t notice the first time I read?”
  + Consider thematic meaning and connections between this ‘text’ and others like it.
  + “What does this ‘text’ cause me to think or wonder about some larger aspect the ‘text’ and of the human condition?”

Remember:

* close reading needs to be a relevant activity that is authentically embedded in your instructional plan
* consider text complexity and strive for rigor whenever possible

Access the featured text.

While you read, be sure to write on the text and use

the white space to make notes and other annotations.

**Close Reading Tasks**

1. **First Reading: On Your Own**

* Circle words that may be unfamiliar.
* Draw pictures when a description or explanation makes you think about an image. (*at least* two!)
* Underline one sentence that you think captures the main idea.
* Put \* next to three important details that you think support the main idea.
* Use the margins to write about connections or questions you may have with the text.

1. **Second Reading: With Your Group**

* Compare your annotations from your first reading.
* Determine the meanings of any unfamiliar words.
* Discuss what the main idea is and details that support it. Try to narrow down the topic into one sentence. Record your sentence summary at the bottom of the text. Make your one sentence summary detailed and thorough, yet concise.
* Think about the writer’s attitude toward the subject matter? How is this revealed? Note this on the page.
* Identify features of the writer’s technique that you find particularly effective. Describe their effectiveness and note this on the page.

**Performance Task:**

With a partner or a triad, consider the featured text and guiding questions.

Choose one of the following activities to complete! Be prepared to share and have fun!

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Radio Ad: A character or personality featured in the text is coming to speak at our conference center. Write a radio advertisement persuading people to come listen. Be sure to include key facts as they relate to the guiding questions, and suggest the background music and tone of the ad. | Playlist: Consider the featured text and guiding questions. Make a list of the key points with details about each key point. Then, take all your key points and try to match the main ideas with titles of songs that you know. Your task is to create a music playlist of song titles that capture the essence of our unit of study. Then, explain how your song choices relate to the featured topic. Strive to come up with at least 8 songs. | Alphabet Soup: Consider the featured text and guiding questions. Write the letters of the alphabet down the left side of a sheet of paper. Using each letter of the alphabet, make a list of the key points using sentences or phrases. Be sure to refer to the text! |
| Quilt Blocks: Consider the featured text and guiding questions. Make a list of the key points with details about each key point. Then, take all your key points and create a quilt block. Each triangle and square will contain a key point, term, or theme. Be mindful of your word choice as well as the colors you choose for each of your blocks. On the back of your quilt block, explain your choices. | One-Pager: Based on the featured text, complete a One-Pager.  Directions:   * Fill the entire page of a regular-sized piece of un-lined paper. * Include the title and source of the selection. * Use color and illustrations.   Things you must have on your one-pager:   * Two or more excerpts from the reading (passages that you like or think are important). Be sure the excerpts are correctly punctuated as quotes. * A graphic representation that is colorful such as a drawing or picture. * A personal connection to the text. | |